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DEPT FOR DRL, EAP/CM

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/28/2031

TAGS: PHUM PREL PGOV CH

SUBJECT: HUMAN RIGHTS: EMBASSY RAISES CONCERNS OVER  
ATTACKS ON CHEN GUANGCHENG LAWYERS

REF: BEIJING 24232 (AND PREVIOUS)

Classified By: Political Internal Unit Chief Susan Thornton. Reasons 1.4 (b/d).

¶1. (C) Lawyers for jailed legal activist Chen Guangcheng were beaten by thugs while traveling to Shandong Province by bus on December 27 to try to meet with their client, according to accounts given by several Beijing-based rights lawyers involved with the case. When the coach the lawyers were riding in crossed the Linyi county line, it was forced over by two cars without license plates. Eight thugs dressed in plain clothes boarded the bus and beat the two lawyers with iron rods. According to the reports, Lawyer Li Jingsong's left eye and left hand were injured, while Li Fangping sustained three gashes to the head. The attackers wore civilian clothes and their cars had no license plates. Calls to the local Linyi police for assistance reportedly went unanswered. Fellow lawyer in the case Teng Biao (protect) said he had not been in direct contact with the pair, who are recovering in a hospital in Linyi county, but that they had been on their way to visit Chen to check on the status of his appeal request.

¶2. (C) Two other defense lawyers in the case, Cheng Hai and Huang Kaiguo, had been traveling to Shandong at the same time to look into the case of Chen Guanghe, who disappeared before he could testify on Chen Guangcheng's behalf at his November 27 trial. The planned investigation by Cheng and Huang into Chen Guanghe's disappearance may have increased tensions over the lawyers' activities, Teng speculated.

¶3. (C) Poloff expressed concern over the reported beatings to MFA Human Rights Division Director Dong Zhihua on December 28, noting that the case appears to be one in a troubling series of cases of intimidation of defense lawyers. Such intimidation calls into question China's commitment to the rule of law. Dong said she had not received any information about the incident, but said that she would look into the case.

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